

January, 23rd 2011

Dear members of the Joint Appropriation Subcommittee on Health and Human Services,

I am writing this letter because I am concerned about the possible reduction in meal preparation time in the Personal Assistance Services. I have a physical disability and rely on PAS for my daily routine. My mother is my live in care giver. She has to help me prepare my meals because I am not strong enough to cook everything on my own. Having a healthy home cooked meal is important to me and all people with disabilities. We deserve to eat a healthy meal every day of the week and that might not happen if meal preparation time is reduced to 4 hrs a week.

If the 5% reduction takes effect a Personal Care Attendant will only have 4 hours a week to cook meals for their clients. This would mean meal preparation would be reduced to 34 minutes per day or 11 minutes per meal. Reducing the meal preparation time to 11 minutes per meal is not enough time to cook a well balanced meal. With this lack of time in meal preparation a consumer's health could be at risk. If a person with a disability does not eat well balanced, healthy meals, this could lead to malnutrition or other health related issues.

Depending on the person's disability, not eating a healthy meal could result in ailments related to their primary diagnosis. If a person has Diabetes they need to eat nutritious meals in order to keep their blood sugar at the proper level. Reducing the meal preparation time could lead to unhealthy living which could result in more people going to the Emergency Room or having extended hospital stays. This would mean an increase in the cost of care rather than a reduction.

The disability community is always ready to fight for their rights. People with disabilities deserve to live independently with the help of PAS. Being independent allows us to contribute to the economy. Please do not reduce the meal preparation time for those of us who use the PAS. People with disabilities deserve to eat a healthy well balanced meal every day of the week. Do what is right for all Montanans!

Respectfully,

Cara Wherley